



Pearson

Policy Watch

Your guide to what's happening in the world of education



The week in a nutshell

This week saw the **State Opening of Parliament** and the Queen present the government's legislative programme for the coming session. Several Bills impacting the education sector were announced, most notably the **Skills and Post-16 Education Bill**, which firms into legislation the Government's flagship lifetime skills guarantee and starts the rebalancing act between further and higher education. Also announced was the **Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill** which aims to fulfil the Government's manifesto pledge to strengthen academic freedom and freedom of speech in England's universities.

The Government announced a **new multi-million package of mental health** support to help children and young people. Up to 7,800 schools and colleges in England will be offered funding worth £9.5m to train a senior mental health lead from their staff in the next academic year.

Professor Len Shackleton (Institute for Economic Affairs) stated the "apprenticeship levy has failed in its objectives and should be scrapped completely." He believes, "it's time to concentrate on things which the government can influence more directly, such as schools and FE colleges, where there is still plenty of room for improvement".

A new **Ofsted report** has found that children with **SEND** in mainstream schools are not getting enough support to assist their learning and development. Ofsted's National Director for Education, Sean Harford said that children with SEND have found it "harder" to engage with remote learning during the pandemic.

This week **Pearson launched a new forum on the impact of COVID-19 on the widening inequalities gap**. As well as including all previous editions of Policy Watch, our **Policy Hub** includes our latest **policy blogs**. This week blogs **on Post-16 educational reform** & the **Queen's Speech**.

Top stories

Queen's Speech: Skills and Post-16 Education Bill

- The intention of this Bill is to transform post-16 education and training by offering adults across the country the opportunity to reskill, which will open up further job opportunities. The ultimate aim is to remove the bias against technical education by bringing universities and FE colleges "closer together".
- The main features of the Bill are: Implementing the lifetime skills guarantee by offering adults the opportunity to retrain later in life; Introducing a lifelong loan entitlement giving individuals access to the equivalent of up to four years' worth of student loans for level 4 to 6 qualifications, which may be used flexibly; Realigning the system so the needs of employers and skills gaps are met and fulfilled; Improving the quality of training available to learners by ensuring qualifications are better regulated and providers' performance can be effectively assessed.

The Government has **announced** a new multi-million package of mental health support designed to support thousands of children and young people.

- Up to 7,800 schools and colleges in England will be offered funding worth £9.5m to train a senior mental health lead from their staff in the next academic year.
- There will also be a new £7m Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme, which provides free expert training, support and resources for staff.

A new Ofsted **report published on Thursday** found that children with SEND in mainstream schools are not getting enough support to assist their learning and development.

- The report also highlights that support from external multi-agency services is not “always timely or implemented appropriately”. And participants’ responses to the research suggested that the “playing field is not level for pupils from poorer backgrounds.”

The Russell Group and Universities UK have published their responses to the **Government’s consultation on alterations to the university admissions system**. The consultation closed on Thursday.

- **Universities UK**, in its **submission**, reaffirmed support for recommendations made last year by the Fair Admissions Review which found that a move to a post-qualification offer (PQO) system could build greater levels of transparency and confidence in the system whilst taking away the reliance on predicted grades.
- **The Russell Group’s response** to the Government’s proposals argues that “careful design” is needed to make a POQ system work and to achieve this, a number of key issues must be addressed first.

Editorial and research fellow at the Institute for Economic Affairs Professor Len Shackleton **has stated** that the “apprenticeship levy has failed in its objectives and should be scrapped completely.”

- Shackleton’s remarks come in response to figures which show that £1bn of the levy funds have gone unspent in the past nine months. Additionally, the scheme has “only managed to generate half of the 3 million jobs intended by 2020.”

Pearson news

The widening inequality gap post-COVID and what it means for access to learning and the labour market

This week Pearson launched a new forum to gather views and evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on the widening inequalities gap and the role that learning and skills can play to address it. The forum is chaired by former skills minister, Rt. Hon. Anne Milton, who [wrote a piece for TES](#) on the project.

[Find out more about the new forum](#)



Cindy Rampersaud on the Queen's Speech

This week saw the State Opening of Parliament. Here is what Cindy Rampersaud had to say about the Queen's Speech and a focus on skills: "Access to learning and skills is a powerful enabler for economic growth and social mobility, and Pearson welcomes the government's focus on post-16 and adult education and training.

"The education, learning and skills sector not only has a major role to play in the economic recovery from Covid-19, but also in addressing the widening inequalities gap since the onset of the pandemic.

"There will be a continued need to maintain flexibility and a broad range of options to support access to learning and reskilling."



Higher Nationals in the Era of Higher Technical Education

Find out about the government's plans for Higher Technical Education and how Higher National qualifications are key to the success of this important stage of education. [Find out more](#)

Policy Blogs: Post-16 education reform & Queen's Speech

In our latest policy blogs, we [outline a new project looking at post-16 education reforms](#), covered in the recent Skills for Jobs White Paper. We also blog about this week's [Queen's Speech](#). For more [policy blogs visit our blogs page](#)

Pearson tweets of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- [Queen's Speech - text](#)
- [Debate - A Brighter Future for the Next Generation](#)
- [Kate Green: Labour's opening in the Queen's Speech debate on: A bright future for the next generation](#)
- [House of Commons Statement - Better Jobs and a Fair Deal at Work](#)
- [APPG for Skills, Careers & Employment - The England Skills Puzzle and life-long learning](#)

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 14 May 2021

Regulators

- Ofqual - Student guide to awarding (Summer 2021) released
- Ofsted - Ofsted publishes research review on religious education
- Ofqual - Post Qualification Admissions reform consultation response
- Ofsted - Some pupils with SEND missing out on specialist support
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator - OIA response to Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill
- Ofqual - Consultation Outcome: Consultation on arrangements for an autumn 2021 exam series

Schools

- Prime Minister's Office - PM unveils new aid for girls' education to prevent pandemic 'lost generation'
- Department for Education - Schools and colleges to benefit from boost in expert mental health support
- Local Government Association (LGA) - responds to £17 million funding to improve mental health in schools
- DfE - Consultation Outcome: Changes to the School Admissions Code
- CaSE - School science vital to levelling-up scientific potential across the UK
- NEU - comment on Queen's Speech

Further Education & Skills

- Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street - Prime Minister to revolutionise skills and training opportunities
- Make UK - Industry calls for targeted sectoral approach on Apprenticeship funding to support high value, high growth manufacturing jobs
- Institute of Economic Affairs - The apprenticeship levy should be scrapped completely, says IEA expert
- Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy - New laws to ensure the UK has the skills it needs
- BEIS - Consultation Outcome: Recognition of professional qualifications and regulation of professions
- Education and Skills Funding Agency - ESFA Update: 12 May 2021
- AOC - Queen's Speech sets legislation for skills and training reforms
- Institute of Economic Affairs - "Unlikely to supercharge economic growth": IEA responds to Queen's Speech

Higher Education

- Sutton Trust - New research brief finds UK admissions system an international outlier
- Universities UK - Admissions reform must not leave students marooned without proper careers support
- University Alliance responds to the DfE consultation on Post-Qualifications Admissions Reform
- Russell Group - Careful design needed to make post-qualification offer system work, says Russell Group
- Russell Group - Russell Group response to government free speech measures
- Universities Alliance - University Alliance responds to the Queen's speech

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 14 May 2021

Northern Ireland

- CCEA Launches Consultation on the Proposed Post Results Service for Summer 2021

What's happening in Parliament next week

House of Commons

Tuesday 18th May 2021

- Education Committee - Accountability hearing: Gillian Keegan MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Apprenticeships and Skills at Department for Education

Wednesday 19th May 2021

- Education Committee - Left behind white pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
Dr Tony Sewell CBE, Chair at Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities
Martyn Oliver, Commissioner at Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities
Professor Steve Strand, Professor of Education at University of Oxford

House of Lords

Tuesday 18th May 2021

- Youth Unemployment Committee - Youth Unemployment
Sir Kevan Collins, Education Recovery Commissioner at Department of Education
The Baroness Wolf of Dulwich CBE, Professor of Public Sector Management at Kings College London